

The Christian News-Letter

No. 267

Edited by
KATHLEEN BLISS

21st August, 1946

DEAR MEMBER,

Two years ago no sphere of the national life was more constantly under discussion than that of education. An Act was before Parliament which every thinking person realized to be of far-reaching effect on the national life, and books, pamphlets and newspaper articles in wide profusion kept the discussion well before the public mind.

TWO YEARS AFTER THE EDUCATION ACT

There are great advantages in thinking about education at a time when it is not under public debate. What is happening behind the scenes at the present time is of great importance for the future. All over the country, in settings as different as the offices of the Ministry in Belgrave Square and the tiny school on the remotest village green, the implications of the new Education Act are being thought out and gradually put into effect. The full toll of damage to the nation's educational plant caused by the war is only now being realized. This is slowly being made good and provision for extension is being added. The Government's decision to raise the school leaving age to fifteen on April 1st, 1947, and to give the necessary priorities in labour and materials to make this possible, was, in face of all its other commitments and difficulties, a bold step. The teaching force is being replenished and increased. Training colleges are full to repletion. Four thousand men and women from the forces are now in training under the emergency training scheme for speedy entry into education. On all hands the verdict is that these new teachers are excellent material and that they will bring a new element into the teaching profession.

An important part of the Act dealt with the setting up of county colleges for part-time education of all young people in employment up to the age of eighteen. It is critically important that the county colleges, when they come into being, should be extremely good. The wrong kind of teaching, the wrong kind of teachers, unsuitable buildings—these might easily inculcate into the young so deep a distaste for education as to cause them as voters to rise up and repeal the Act. The likelihood that it will be six years before there is

compulsory attendance at county colleges should therefore be a matter of relief rather than of regret, always supposing that the interval is filled with improvisation at the highest level designed to discover and eliminate defects before they are embodied in buildings which cannot be destroyed. Now is the moment at which Local Education Authorities should be asked questions about their plans and encouraged to discuss them with the public. This is a matter for local, not national, initiative, for the county colleges should be, in one aspect, institutions for preserving and developing local culture.

THE FURTHER EDUCATION OF ADULTS

It is good news that the Ministry of Education means business about the further education of adults and that some statement on the subject will be published in the near future. An attempt will be made to heal the divorce between art and technology, between merely cultural and merely useful, which has so far stratified further education. There will also be suggestions for bringing the universities into closer touch with further education going on in the areas which surround them. As soon as schemes are made public it is greatly to be hoped that the Churches will come in on the ground floor, for it would be a thousand pities if there were a leap forward in the education of adults along the neutral and secularized lines of the modern universities as they grew up during the last century.

We live in the kind of world in which the Churches have to choose between working in and through secular organizations (exercising tolerance and claiming no privilege) or being left on the fringe of most of the vital and creative movements in society. Because the choice is not being faced, we are drifting into the latter position. At Sigtuna, Sweden, is a Scandinavian Peoples College, to which is attached in integral relation with it a church institution for the training of the laity. Elsewhere too the Church is in close touch with adult education. In this country education authorities frequently hold the Churches at arm's length for fear of introducing denominational controversy into what they like us to think are the untroubled millponds of their educational planning. Leaving on one side for the moment the question whether education, any more than life itself, can escape death by boredom if it contains no tensions, hazards, precipices and head-on collisions, it is obviously desirable, especially for the good of local authorities and of education that this antiquated prejudice, where it persists, should be blown up. The next step is that local churches should know what they want to do in relation to the development of regional schemes for adult education and bring forward their suggestions. That the Churches which for

centuries have been one of the chief repositories of local tradition and culture should be bankrupt of ideas at this point is unthinkable, yet possible. A new reaching out of this kind demands people and time. If these new things are to be done, then a lot of old things must be given up, a lot of clanking, creaking machinery must be turned out on to the dump. Where are the reckless men who are prepared to forestall rather than bewail a situation?

IMPROVISATION

The long and necessary delay in implementing the main provisions of the Education Act means that we are now in a period of improvisation, which can be either frustrating or fruitful, as it is used badly or well. At the present moment children are leaving school with less education than the jobs to which they are going demand. Not unconnected, perhaps, with this fact is another: that whereas before the war 40,000 young employees in industry were released for at least part of the day for education during working hours, either on the firm's premises or on premises provided by the Local Education Authorities, the figure is now 100,000. In view of all the difficulties by which industry is beset in recovering from the war this increase is remarkable. It means that a very great number of firms are anticipating the establishment of county colleges by sending their young people to factory schools or to courses at technical schools. And this 100,000 is not the total number, for in many workshops and small factories, small groups of young people are being given some kind of teaching and training. The importance of this development was emphasized by Dr. Marjorie Reeves in her Supplement to News-Letter No. 265.

Last month the Christian Frontier Council organized for people engaged on this educational work in industry two conferences along the lines of Dr. Reeves' Supplement.¹ There is no doubt that alongside of the concern for efficient workers, there is growing in many places in industrial life a sense of the responsibility of firms for the welfare of their young workers, and that whereas a few years ago welfare was deemed to be concerned with first aid, safety precautions, cleanliness and so on, now a wider conception has developed and many are asking what is the effect of the work itself upon young people, and how it can be used to good ends. Here is something which cannot be swept into the county colleges. It belongs to work itself or it belongs nowhere. Industry has an educational function to perform which is complementary to the work of county colleges. We have been driven forward into a conception of education which so far

¹ It is hoped to issue a report at a later date.

has excluded work, and there could be no more profitable use of the interim between the passing of the Act and its implementation than some experiment along these lines which might modify the working out of the Act in this direction. If this is to be done well a philosophy of work is essential. The "learn this and you'll get on" incentive of much industrial education breaks down because in the nature of things there is only promotion for the few. It has to be replaced by another.

This conception of work as itself an education and of industry as potentially a form of culture cannot be divorced from the rôle of parents in education. That the two things seem so remote when placed in juxtaposition in a single sentence is an indication of what we have lost, for it was through work that a man taught his sons, on the farm or in the blacksmith's shop; and in the early days of the factory his sons followed him in and were under his tutelage. Bad as factory conditions may have been, at least the whole weight of the parent was thrown on the side of taking pains to teach his own boy, and moderating his language and behaviour to what he would want his own son to hear and see. "Thanks to the factory and its implications," says Rosenstock-Huessy in his latest book,¹ "man's labour is separated from his right to teach, once the supreme value of a master's earthly life."

Parents have been saddled in the Education Act with a responsibility the terms of which are vague in the extreme. They are required in the Act to give to their children that form of education best suited to their age, ability and aptitude. By education here is meant schooling. In the minds of some educators, no doubt, the rôle of parents is no more than to be the butt of compulsion. Children cannot be punished for not coming to school, somebody must be, therefore let it be the parents. But whether parents themselves are going to be willing to accept so negative a rôle is, we hope, open to doubt. There are indications that parents, or many of them, see themselves in another light, as those who press that their own children may have strict equality with those who so far have had the education of the privileged. We have gone a long, long way from the conception of the *right to teach* as one of the essential rights of man and the loss is unmeasured and the way to recover it unexplored.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

¹ *The Christian Future*, Scribners. An English edition is being prepared by the S.C.M. Press.

THE MAN AND THE MACHINE

By VIOLET MARKHAM

The word of the Lord was precious in those days ; there was no open vision.

Jesus saith : Let not him who seeks cease until he finds, and when he finds he shall be astonished ; astonished he shall reach the Kingdom, and having reached the Kingdom he shall rest.

Lord Keynes, writing in 1919, concluded a pessimistic survey of the world in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* with the following words : " We have been moved already beyond endurance and need rest. Never in the life-time of men now living has the universal element in the soul of man burnt so dimly."

It is a measure of the tragedy of our times that the author of those words, and indeed all of us whose memories cover both German wars, have lived to see a further blotting out of lights already dim and the universal element in the soul of man still more quenched. Great though the losses and sufferings of the 1914-1918 struggle, they were to prove but a prelude to devastation, both moral and material, on a wider and more horrifying scale than war has yet provided. And the process shows no sign of a halt ; "Cry havoc" is still a slogan to which thousands rally. The hierophants of Science, who constantly proclaim their goodwill towards mankind coupled with expressions of unfortunate helplessness about the reaction of their work on armaments, continue to provide ever bigger and better weapons of destruction as terrifying to our latter days as the pre-historic monster to the jungle. The tank has grown into a mammoth capable of grinding cities to powder. Planes soar higher and faster, the better to drop bombs whose destructive capacity grows ever greater. Finally, the citadel of a reluctant nature has been breached and the garrison forced to yield up some of the innermost secrets of her being. And so man, part devil, part child, and yet by glimpses conscious that he is a temple of the Holy Spirit and has a divine Fatherhood, stands confronted to-day with the atom bomb and the incalculable consequences that wait on the atom bomb.

If we turn from Science with this terrible gift in her hand and look round on the world of men and women the prospect is no less bleak and discouraging. Nature, as though exasperated by man's perversity, has taken a hand in the game and added her own quota of destruction—drought, storm and famine—to the miseries of a shattered world and the still more shattered spirits of its inhabitants. That war should remain the only unifying force that mankind has yet discovered is of all paradoxes the most unhappy. But even so the sense of a common purpose among allies has degenerated into

an orgy of mutual suspicion and ill-will. Rased nerves express themselves in sharp and bitter words. The fine by-products of war, the heroism, sacrifice and endurance which lend it temporary glamour, have disappeared, and we are left to struggle with the permanent fruits of an evil tree whose roots are grounded in the worst passions of the human heart.

Man's economy, material and spiritual alike, lies shattered and the ruins of his temporal habitations are but symbolic of the spiritual darkness which has fallen on the world. We have in truth been tried beyond endurance and as we look with jaded eyes on a starving Europe, a hostile Russia, a chaotic and hungry Asia and an American continent incalculable in its wealth and its political irresponsibility, it is little wonder that, confronted with the job of living in such a world, even stout hearts are daunted and weak ones give up in despair.

Yet this same job of living remains a compelling duty for all of us. Politicians know in times of crisis that whatever the deadlock the King's government must be carried on. Similarly in a time of universal crisis men are under an obligation to struggle as best they may with the government of the world. Let us remember the world is not old, it is fantastically young, a mere babe in its cradle. Great vistas of time stretch before it with all the opportunities that time offers for the healing of wounds and the repairing of broken paths, in a word, for a future that does not necessarily copy all the evils of the past. If the short view is menacing, happily it does not exhaust the content of the future. There is time ahead in which to learn to do better.

The present confusion in men's minds is the product of more than one cause. To the vast weariness due to the war and the disillusion which appears invariably to dog the footsteps of peace, must be added the fruits of a philosophy which in season and out of season has preached the doctrine that man is an accident in a planless universe, the product of a haphazard evolution that has neither author nor design. Apart from the reactions of this philosophy on the behaviour of the young, who are quick to draw the moral of a world without sanction or principle, it is inevitable that pessimism and cynicism should be rife at a time like the present among the prophets and disciples of this school of thought. Their vision is limited to the short view in which God plays no part, and the short view is bad and black. Further, man as the crown of creation and uncontrolled master of his fate is a curiously unsatisfactory figure at a time when total war brings home his essential kinship with the ape and tiger. Pessimism and cynicism are, however, inadmissible for Christians who are committed to the longer view and dare to hope that a day will come when in the providence of God the broken arcs will begin to form themselves into the perfect round.

Meanwhile, the present with its atrocious difficulties is sitting on our doorstep. How are we to meet its claims and shoulder its burthens with some measure of hope and confidence?

THE RECURRING PATTERNS OF THE STRUGGLE WITH EVIL

I venture to suggest that when we step aside in thought from the immediate chaos of the world and bring the big perspectives of history to bear on our present problems, some familiar patterns in human experience begin to emerge. This is not the first breakdown in the world's history. Science applied to transport, communication and armaments has made it the greatest and the most spectacular, but on a smaller scale similar situations have arisen. The fall of the Roman Empire must have appeared as catastrophic to the citizens of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., as the collapse of Europe appears to-day. The classical world was in ruins when St. Augustine wrote of the City of God. When in the thirteenth century the Turk quenched the light of the Byzantine Empire, the artists and scholars who fled before the barbarians must have felt the end of their own world had come.

The story repeats itself in many minor forms among persecuted peoples of many races. The Puritans who survived to see the excesses of the Restoration period must have suffered in a quite special way from a sense of being abandoned by God.

For the great fact of evil persists through history, evil as a cosmic force ever present in the affairs of men whether collectively as nations or individually as human beings. The struggle in the macrocosm finds itself repeated in the microcosm. As the invisible electron, circling round its nucleus, obeys the same laws as those that sway the distant galaxies, so the conflict raging in the world has its parallel in the conflict that tears asunder the individual heart and mind.

The genius of Shakespeare has illumined that struggle as it stormed its way through one of the world's supreme minds. The despair of Lear abandoned on the heath in the tempest, the brutal accident of Cordelia's death, touch us with this sense of cosmic evil and catastrophe. The play is almost unbearable on the stage because, as the story develops, we find ourselves brought up as it were against the concentrated suffering and evil of the whole world. In his brilliant study, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*, Professor Theodore Spencer has pointed out that the Elizabethan age, far from being an epoch of vigorous expansion and conquest of the seas, was one of acute intellectual disintegration. The ordered cosmology of the Middle Ages had broken down in confusion, Copernicus had destroyed the position of the earth as the centre of the universe and had

relegated it to that of a minor planet of an insignificant sun. Montaigne had struck at the root of man's moral and intellectual supremacy, and Machiavelli had attacked the theory of wise and benevolent kingship. The hierarchies on which an ordered society were built had been completely undermined and men's minds were confused, distracted and unhappy. Shakespeare reflects in his tragedies the spirit of his time no less than the conflicts of circumstance and character. But, and let us remember this for our comfort, conflict is not the last word of that great spirit, universal as none other in its outlook. After Lear and Macbeth come Perdita and Miranda. The curtain falls not on the heath and the shambles, but on the masque and the sheep shearing.

Evil and the conflict that results from it we must accept as part of the impenetrable mysteries to which we find no answer in this world. The Christian is called upon by his following and profession to take it as part of the day's work, to struggle with it, to sublimate it as far as it lies in his power, never to succumb before its attack.

THE RELEASE OF THE INDIVIDUAL FROM THE MACHINE

This is the real challenge of our time and apart from the long term Christian approach no other way has yet penetrated the dark forest. Light was given to the world when, as we Christians believe, the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us. But the light shines in darkness and the darkness comprehends it not. Jesus of Nazareth held out no hope of a great and universal illumination. It rests with the individual, in George Eliot's words, to widen the skirts of light and make the fight with evil narrower.

For it is on the individual that the hope of the world turns and it is on the individual that the burthen of a mass mechanized world presses to-day. Modern life tends more and more to devour its own children, the machine seeking as it would seem to swallow up human beings and turn them into helpless cogs of a dehumanized mechanical process. Some years ago in the News-Letter Mr. G. D. H. Cole wrote an impressive article on the perils that confront Democracy up against Hugeness. He drew attention to the sense of helpless impotence in the individual man and woman faced by vast mechanical forces they can neither understand nor control. The peril has not grown less in the interval. A mechanical civilization out of hand is the very core of the great struggle for Man's soul which rends the world to-day. A mechanized society operating the great centres of power created by scientific invention is not only the handmaid but the predisposing cause of the totalitarian State. Little wonder that greedy and ambitious men have seized upon the opportunities of aggrandisement which have come their way and continue to exploit them ruthlessly. There is only one check on the present drift towards the concentration of power in the hands of the few with the

gamut of evil it entails, and that is the rescue of the many from the narcotic influences that beset them—the siren voices that whisper soothingly “don’t worry; we can manage all this troublesome business of public affairs for you so much better than you can do it yourself, only put yourself in our hands and all will be well.” Let those with a mind to give up remember that the door through which the individual makes his exit provides a sure and certain entry for the Dictator, and freedom once lost has to be regained with blood and tears.

The main features of this latter day struggle are clear. If essential liberties, spiritual and political, are to be preserved, we need to rescue the individual from the tyranny of the machine and to fill him with a lively sense of personal dignity and worth. He is a part of God’s creation—not a mere cipher on the board of other men’s designs. On the contrary, he has very positive duties towards other men as they to him. Growing rights as a citizen bring proportionate obligations, for the citizen is not a serf to be appeased with bread and games, but is a man with a definite and responsible part to play within his own circle, be it large or small. He must learn to look beyond the borders of that circle, little encouraging though the sight may be. He cannot shuffle off his personal responsibility on some large scale organization which will do his thinking and voting for him either at home or abroad. Leagues and committees, however large and high powered in membership, cannot by themselves regenerate the world. As sounding boards for careerists they help too often to deepen the cynicism and suspicions prevalent about the conduct of public affairs.

THE INNER CITADEL

Large scale organizations have their part to play in giving effect to such goodwill as exists in the world, but they are impotent to create that goodwill without the active co-operation of the individual. Peace—by which I mean not a shabby negative state in which men refrain temporarily from dropping bombs on each other’s heads—is a creative state in which men’s faculties of heart and mind are set free to qualify for the glorious liberty of the children of God. But peace thus conceived involves a change in the individual temper. Each man and woman has to create it in the discipline, humility and purgation of his or her heart. In Bunyan’s allegory the citadel of Mansoul could never be won by the enemy unless the citizens themselves connived at its surrender. What quality of defence are we putting up against the Sanballats and Tobiahs who are determined that the walls of Jerusalem shall never rise again? Can we of the small Christian minority dare to think ourselves free of all inner treasons to the faith we profess?

To insist that these moral and spiritual issues are fundamental to our present desperate situation is, of course, not to ignore the economic and social questions which necessarily play so big a part in daily life. The present position is lopsided. Science is in the saddle, riding a very high horse. Science is an aspect of God's truth, one of the mediums through which he reveals himself to the world of men. The mystery and wonder of God's creation only deepens as science uncovers more and more of the amazing content of the universe and the unceasing operation of law both in the infinitely great and the infinitely little. Some nervous souls occasionally demand that scientific research should be restricted. Such a demand is not only an absurdity, but a sin against the light. But scientists would do well to remember that truth is a unity and its different aspects cannot contradict each other. There are other truths besides those of science and any apparent discrepancy in the total Truth of which they all form part is due to faulty premises at some point. Hence the so-called conflict between religion and science which alarmed our grandparents. The Christian Church has at times nailed very unfortunate flags to its mast, none more unfortunate than the hostility and fear with which the orthodox have regarded the growth of Science and its impact on dogma. If Science suffered from that attitude during the last century, when T. H. Huxley complained that he could not do his biological work because he was always running up against a notice board with the words "No road, by order, Moses," to-day the rôles are reversed.

It is difficult at times not to feel that Science now claims a pre-eminence above all other forms of human thought and activity, and that like a lusty young cuckoo she is bent on ejecting the other birds from the nest. The arts and humanities are increasingly relegated to a minor position with fatal consequences to the development of a sensitive and responsible human being as distinct from the economic man. "We live by admiration, hope and love," cries the poet; "we live by kilowatts, kilocycles, kilograms," replies the new cave man from amid the litter of his scientific apparatus. During the recent B.B.C. broadcasts on the Challenge of our Time, many listeners commented on a certain touch of arrogance in some of the scientific speakers. This note is wholly at variance with the patience and humility always regarded as the hall mark in the past of great pioneers in scientific discovery. The latter day scientists, though modest about their own subjects, appear to be dogmatic about those of which they have no special knowledge. Some forget that to speak with authority on atomic fission does not qualify a man to lay down the law about the Kingdom of God. Admittedly, science can fill the house of life with every imaginable gadget and convenience, but it has failed signally up to the present to provide a satisfactory blue print for the design of the house itself. Over and over again

the architect has been ignored and the building run up without plan or foundations. Contempt for man rapidly succeeds contempt for God. The rights of the individual and the sanctity of human life are soon swallowed up in the moral quicksands of an ideology that has no principle but power.

Uneasiness begins to show itself among serious minded non-Christians about the breakdown in behaviour and human relationships which follows on the worship of an ideology rather than the worship of God. A congested divorce court registers the decay in the ideals of Christian marriage. The gentler virtues are in eclipse and in their place we find an immense growth in material power and apparatus piled up on the very edge of a moral abyss which menaces mankind with destruction. The danger has become so obvious that the need is felt for a code of ethics which will enable the latter day pagans to scrape along the edge of the abyss without fatal accident. Intelligence, goodwill, social responsibility, co-operation are commended therefore, all features be it noted derived from the Christian ethics whose authority the speakers repudiate. But if no spiritual principle exists in this planless universe, what possible validity can attach to a system of ethics as fortuitous presumably in its evolution as any other phenomena in an accidental cosmos? All great religions agree in much the same rules of human conduct, but they regard human conduct not as an end in itself, but as part of a divine relationship. Further, how far can ethics exist permanently cut off from the faiths which gave them birth? A slip carriage detached from its parent train will run quite satisfactorily for a time, thanks to the momentum acquired from the vanished express, but it comes to a sure and certain end without hope of renewal.

THE FAITHFUL REMNANT IN A SICK WORLD

We have to negotiate a passage perilous. The crisis is on us. If we do not find the right path our particular phase of civilization may easily collapse. There have been dark ages before and there is no assurance a dark age may not return. The atom bomb hangs in hideous fashion suspended above our heads. Knowing all about the properties of uranium will not save the world from the collapse which waits on moral failure and lack of guiding principle adequate to the needs of the world. The contrast between men as they are and men as they ought to be is at all times depressing. The contrast, be it said candidly, is particularly afflicting when applied to professing Christians. But no error can be greater than any wholesale condemnation of human nature. It is my own belief that the number of good people in the world far exceeds the bad. There are whole ranges, often in obscure places, of sacrifice, goodness and devotion that dignify existence. The poor and humble sometimes show a quality of life which the angels themselves may well envy.

But these simple people, whose fidelity to the best as they know it is the real antiseptic which keeps a sick world somehow staggering on its course, are not propagandists. They have no desire to play a part in public affairs; they have neither taste nor capacity for getting their views across. They would be too modest to think their views of consequence. Consequently they exercise no influence proportionate to their merits. The trouble-makers on the other hand, shrewd, competent and sophisticated folk, are to be found on a higher level of experience and the bad find it terribly easy to lead the good by the nose. But though those who prance behind the footlights may appear to monopolize the stage, they are in fact only a minor part of the company.

Jeremiahs are inevitably vocal to-day, but is there not a touch of spiritual superiority in those who despair of the world? There is something very superior about the cry: "I, only I, am left of all the prophets of the Lord." The answer is, of course, that on a less superficial view seven thousand other people are found who have not bowed the knee to Baal. As was made perfectly clear to Elijah we are not at liberty to linger lamenting in our cave when there is work for the Lord to be done, journeys to be made, prophets and kings to be anointed. Our business surely is to find the seven thousand, to mobilize them, to give them the strength which comes from unity of purpose and a common faith, so that one and all in these hard times we may strive each to hold up the other's arms that we fail not in our appointed tasks. When the fire and the whirlwind and the earthquake have done their worst, the still small voice is heard summoning men yet again to that endless adventure which is the search for the Kingdom of God. Along that path will lie many a surprise, many a failure, many a disappointment. There is no open vision and we must grope our way amid the confusion of a twilight world. But in the ancient words quoted at the head of this paper, Jesus bids his followers persist in their search till they find the Kingdom. What they find will be so different from any preconceived idea that it will fill them with astonishment. But having reached the Kingdom they will rest, and by "rest" surely is meant no passive state of being, but a state in which the active fulfilment of God's will has become a reality in the light of his presence.

Subscriptions—12s. 6d. (\$3.00 in U.S.A. and Canada) for one year. 6s. 6d. for six months (Great Britain and Ireland only). Single copies 6d.; reduction for quantities.

Bound Volumes—Vols. II—X (May 1940—Dec. 1945) 8s. 6d. post free, or 7s. 6d. in sets of four or more consecutive volumes.

Groups—Special rates for group subscriptions may be had on application.

All communications and subscriptions should be sent to—

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, 20 BALCOMBE STREET, DORSET SQUARE, LONDON, N.W. 1.

Published by Dr. J. H. Oldham for the Christian Frontier Council, and printed in Great Britain by the Church Army Press, Cowley, Oxford.